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Anaconda process area seeing lots of fieldwork

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A considerable amount of fieldwork and a general sense of working together could be two ways to describe ongoing progress at the old Anaconda Mine process area.

Dan Ferriter, Environmental Business Manager for Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO), said efforts continue onsite to complete soil sampling, which could be immediately followed by installation of groundwater monitoring wells north of the mine as early as next February.

"We're finally just getting a lot of work done," Ferriter said. "I'm really happy."

During the Nov. 4 meeting of the Lyon County Board of Commissioners, County Commissioner Phyllis Hunewill reflected this outlook noting how progress has increased following the recent transfer of BLM's responsibility from their Carson City office to their state office in Reno.

"Everyone seems to be working together," she said. "We're just really pleased with that."

It was also noted no word has yet been received regarding Nevada Governor Kenny Guinn's decision of whether to list the Anaconda Mine under Section 106.

Some of the sampling work this week included trenching around utility lines to check for any fluid/gas leakage into surrounding soils and the drilling of sampling wells within the process area.

Ferriter said about 27-28 holes will be drilled with about three later becoming permanent monitoring well locations. The others, following lithological study and water samples, would be plugged.

In compliance with the updated health and safety plan, Ferriter said all workers are wearing dosimeter badges, which are tested regularly; however, he said nothing has yet been detected above background radiation levels, let alone levels threatening to workers. Concerns come in light of recent discovery of elevated radiation levels in some portions of the process area.

In regards to site health and safety plans, Ferriter said a joint plan is nearly completed between involved agencies, which would cover the entire site. It would also be included within individual work plans designed for individual events and/or equipment.

Also, in working jointly, soil sampling has begun on BLM's portion of the process area, which includes about 30 of the process area's 250 acres. Previously, lack of an adequate health and safety plan prevented such action outside of privately owned portions.

Ferriter said he hopes drilling would be completed in the process area by February. From there, a much-anticipated monitoring well location plan, which is currently receiving comments, would hopefully allow the drill rig to be relocated north of the mine and continue drilling.

So far, he said all three agencies (BLM, EPA and the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection) have taken favorably to the proposed well locations, recently proposed by ARCO.

The bigger issue with the plan is not so much well locations as it is types of constituents and sampling to be checked; however, he said it is just a matter of the agencies sitting down and hashing out details barring any large concerns. He said it is obvious some standard elements would be examined in the monitoring wells with other, more complicated radionuclides added once agencies agree as to which ones.

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